February 28, 2019 - Introduced by Joint Legislative Council. Referred to Committee on Education.

AN ACT to create 115.28 (66) of the statutes; relating to: employing a dyslexia specialist at the Department of Public Instruction and making an appropriation.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau
This bill is explained in the NOTES provided by the Joint Legislative Council in the bill.
For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

Joint Legislative Council prefatory note: This bill was prepared for the Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Identification and Management of Dyslexia. Testimony before the committee indicated that several states have created a position for a dyslexia specialist at the state or school district level. In Maine and Minnesota, such positions are housed in the states’ departments of education. Duties of dyslexia specialists in other states include providing technical assistance for dyslexia and related conditions and serving as the primary source of information and support for schools in addressing the needs of students with dyslexia and related conditions. At its September 18, 2018, meeting, the committee discussed legislation creating a dyslexia specialist position in the Department of Public Instruction and instructed the Legislative Council to have the bill drafted. The committee decided to include detailed qualification
requirements for the position, noting that an individual with specialized training in dyslexia concerns would be best prepared to assist with the remediation of dyslexia and related conditions.

The bill requires DPI to hire a dyslexia specialist beginning in the 2019-20 school year and provides $95,000 per year to fund this position. The dyslexia specialist’s duties are to 1) provide schools with information, technical assistance, and support related to dyslexia and related conditions; 2) provide schools with information, technical assistance, and support related to addressing the needs of pupils with dyslexia and related conditions; 3) increase professional awareness in schools, and instructional competencies of teachers, to meet the educational needs of pupils with dyslexia and related conditions or identified with risk characteristics associated with dyslexia and related conditions; and 4) develop implementation guidance and make recommendations to the state superintendent of public instruction for comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction practices and strategies to be used to assist regular education teachers and special education teachers to recognize educational needs of and improve literacy outcomes for pupils with dyslexia and related conditions or identified with risk characteristics associated with dyslexia and related conditions, including recommendations related to increasing the availability of online professional development programs and materials.

SECTION 1. 115.28 (66) of the statutes is created to read:

115.28 (66) DYSLEXIA SPECIALIST. (a) Employ a dyslexia specialist who has all of the following qualifications:

1. The individual is a dyslexia therapist, dyslexia training specialist, psychologist or private practice school psychologist licensed under ch. 455, school psychologist licensed by the department, speech-language pathologist licensed under subch. II of ch. 459, or speech and language pathologist licensed by the department.

2. The individual has a minimum of 5 years of experience in screening, identifying, and treating dyslexia and related conditions.

3. The individual has received advanced training in, and is knowledgeable about, dyslexia and related conditions and using interventions and treatments that are scientifically based, multisensory, direct, explicit, structured, and sequential in the areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

(b) Employ a dyslexia specialist under par. (a) to do all of the following:
1. Provide schools with information, technical assistance, and support related to dyslexia and related conditions.

2. Provide schools with information, technical assistance, and support related to addressing the needs of pupils with dyslexia and related conditions.

3. Increase professional awareness in schools, and instructional competencies of teachers, to meet the educational needs of pupils with dyslexia and related conditions or identified with risk characteristics associated with dyslexia and related conditions.

4. Develop implementation guidance and make recommendations to the state superintendent for comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction practices and strategies to be used to assist regular education teachers and special education teachers to recognize educational needs of and improve literacy outcomes for pupils with dyslexia and related conditions or identified with risk characteristics associated with dyslexia and related conditions, including recommendations related to increasing the availability of online professional development programs and materials.

**SECTION 2. Nonstatutory provisions.**

(1) Beginning on January 1, 2020, and ending on July 1, 2021, the state superintendent of public instruction shall employ a dyslexia specialist under s. 115.28 (66) who, in addition to the qualifications described under s. 115.28 (66) (a), has any of the following qualifications:

(a) The individual has fellow-level certification by the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators.

(b) The individual has any of the following categories of membership in the Academic Language Therapy Association:
1. Instructor of certified academic language practitioner.

2. Certified academic language therapist.

3. Qualified instructor.

(c) The individual has a certification with the Center for Effective Reading Instruction as a structured literacy/dyslexia interventionist or structured literacy/dyslexia specialist.

SECTION 3. Fiscal changes.

(1) In the schedule under s. 20.005 (3) for the appropriation to the department of public instruction under s. 20.255 (1) (a), the dollar amount for fiscal year 2019–20 is increased by $47,500 to increase the authorized FTE positions for the department by 1.0 GPR position on January 1, 2020, for the purpose of employing the dyslexia specialist described in s. 115.28 (66). In the schedule under s. 20.005 (3) for the appropriation to the department of public instruction under s. 20.255 (1) (a), the dollar amount for fiscal year 2020–21 is increased by $95,000 to provide funding for the position authorized under this subsection.

SECTION 4. Effective date.

(1) This act takes effect on the day after publication, or on the 2nd day after publication of the 2019 biennial budget act, whichever is later.